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Coordination, programme and other questions: mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2011/6. Based on a variety of sources, including responses received from United Nations entities, the report assesses progress made in the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy across the United Nations system. It places a special emphasis on the promotion of accountability for system-wide work on gender equality and the empowerment of women at both the global and country levels. The report presents the recently approved system-wide action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which institutes a system-wide accountability framework. The action plan is the result of a consultative process facilitated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and engaging the United Nations entities that are members of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.

The report also includes recommendations aimed at further progress, for consideration by the Economic and Social Council.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to paragraph 8 of resolution 2011/6 of the Economic and Social Council, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its substantive session of 2012 a report on the implementation of the resolution, with particular emphasis placed on progress in promoting system-wide accountability on gender equality and the empowerment of women at both the global and country levels.

2. In the resolution, the Economic and Social Council requested the United Nations system to continue the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in accordance with previous resolutions of the Council, in particular resolution 2008/34, and General Assembly resolution 64/289. The Council also requested the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all operational mechanisms, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and other development frameworks, ensuring that managers provided leadership and support, to advance gender mainstreaming, strengthening monitoring and evaluation so as to allow system-wide assessment of progress. In addition, the Council called upon the United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/289, to fully assume its role in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

3. The present report is organized in five sections. Section I contains the introduction; section II provides an overview on progress in the implementation of resolution 2011/6; section III assesses the progress of the work carried out by UN-Women in its role of leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women; section IV presents an overview of remaining gaps and challenges; and section V includes recommendations aimed at accelerated action for consideration by the Council.

4. The report draws on information and data provided, in response to questionnaires issued by UN-Women, by 33 United Nations entities[1] and the

[1] The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the International Training Centre of ILO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Women, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Resident Coordinators in the eight countries in which United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks are scheduled to be rolled out in 2012-2013.[2]

II. Implementation of resolution 2011/6

A. Results-based management

5. The United Nations system approach of contributing to nationally owned results is focused on strengthening national capacities, reinforcing national leverage and widening policy choice.[3] Results-based management for gender equality is a management strategy in which development actors design, implement, monitor and evaluate their actions in the context of their contributions to a set of gender equality results, i.e., their interventions contribute to the process of social and economic change that promotes gender equality as a development goal in its own right. By identifying and analysing inequalities, discriminatory practices and systemic drivers of discrimination and unjust and imbalanced power relations, United Nations entities help to address in a more effective manner both development challenges that specifically affect the situation of women and girls and broader development challenges, leading to more sustainable results.[4]

6. At the corporate level, most United Nations entities continued to develop or update gender-related policies, strategies and action plans with gender-related expected outcomes and performance indicators, which guide the mainstreaming of gender. New developments included the 2011 FAO "Policy on gender equality: attaining food security goals in agriculture and rural development". IFAD, ITC and OHCHR also reported new policies on gender mainstreaming. UNHCR updated its age, gender and diversity policy. The Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs incorporated gender into its strategic framework in order to further streamline gender issues into its activities related to public administration and development management. Furthermore, the UNRWA gender action plan for 2012-2013 was developed, serving as a basis for the assessment of the Agency's commitment to the achievement of gender equality in terms of the services provided to Palestinian refugees.

7. Most United Nations entities reported the use of multi-year funding frameworks, strategic frameworks and budgets that incorporate gender equality as a cross-cutting issue. For example, the promotion of gender equality in ILO is cross-cutting in the ILO programme and budget for 2012-2013, for which the entire organization shares responsibility. Each of its 19 outcomes has a separate section specifically outlining how gender equality and discrimination will be addressed. Entities also reported gender-related performance standards with clear benchmarks and targets. In UNAIDS, 2 of the 10 corporate goals of the 2012-2015 unified budget, results and accountability framework are on gender equality: (a) meeting the

[2] Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Chile, Paraguay, Tajikistan, Togo and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

[3] See "Strengthening RBM harmonization for improved development results", United Nations Development Group, 2010.

[4] "Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation: towards UNEG guidance", United Nations Evaluation Group, 2011.

gender-specific needs of women and girls in HIV response; and (b) zero tolerance for gender-based violence. Each goal includes specified outcomes, outputs and activities, and there are indicators of impact, outcome and output.

8. Overall, these policy documents and funding frameworks promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, including by providing guidance on how to implement a well-coordinated approach and by allowing for the tracking of performance and enhancing reporting and accountability. They also guide members of the United Nations country teams in the incorporation of gender perspectives into operational activities, through the definition of programme direction and priority focus areas for interventions to ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed throughout the entities' organizational mandates.

9. At the national level, the United Nations system is promoting results-based management for gender equality as one of the principles for the programming of its operational activities. The 2010 United Nations Development Group guidance note on the application of the programming principles to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework reinforces coordinated system-wide and country-level efforts to use results-based management with a view to integrating gender equality into United Nations-supported programmes.[5] Moreover, the Group's handbook on results-based management provides additional guidance to for United Nations country teams in ensuring that gender issues are thoroughly reflected in their results frameworks. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework programming network of the Group conducted a peer review of 13 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks for the period 2011-2016. Through an analysis of outcomes and outputs, the review confirmed the integration of gender issues, describing the changes for rights-holders and duty-bearers leading to progress in gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as indicators for tracking progress towards gender equality.

10. United Nations country teams are expected to contribute to the national development process, including through national and sectoral vision statements and development plans, poverty reduction strategy papers, sector-wide or programme-based approaches, technical support for the provision of direct budget support and joint assistance strategies, and other mechanisms, making use of their resources at the national level and, where appropriate, the regional and global levels. In doing so, the teams pursue gender-specific actions and promote women's empowerment, on the one hand, and facilitate the integration of gender equality concerns into political commitments to the formulation of policies, programmes and projects, on the other.

11. To date, all eight "Delivering as one" pilots have implemented United Nations country team performance indicators with respect to gender equality and gender audits, and/or have carried out initiatives aimed at the establishment of some form of gender marker to assess performance and investment. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the United Nations Development Assistance Plan One Plan for 2011-2015 established gender equality as a programming principle against which every action and activity must be monitored. Twenty per cent of One Fund allocations are

[5] In 2007, the United Nations adopted five programming principles for the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework: a human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, capacity development, and results-based management.

dependent on the delivery of cross-cutting considerations in the areas of gender equality and human rights, and the quality assurance review includes gender equality indicators. In Viet Nam, the One Plan for 2012-2016 includes $40 million allocated to gender equality programming (10 per cent of the budget), tracked through a gender marker and representing a twofold increase compared with the previous plan.

B. Oversight: monitoring, evaluation, audit and reporting

12. Evaluation and gender audits seek to determine whether a gender perspective has been integrated into policies and programmes, and they highlight the importance of clear implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure visible and institutionalized efforts towards gender equality results. For example, the midterm review of UNDP assessed progress in the implementation of its gender equality strategy for 2008-2013. UNDP also started a pilot on Gender Equality Seal certification, to assess and certify gender-related performance in its Argentina, Bhutan and Kyrgyzstan country offices. The monitoring and evaluation strategy of UNEP requires that gender actions be monitored in terms of project outputs by the appropriate programme managers.

13. WFP conducted a gender equality institutional assessment, which, while acknowledging the Programme's strengths, also highlighted areas for improvement, including reporting on results relating to gender equality issues and integrating gender into WFP policies, projects and guidance documents. Through its participation in the Asia-Pacific Regional Advisory Group on Women, Peace and Security, ESCAP monitors progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). As part of the Task Force on Human Rights and Gender Equality of the United Nations Evaluation Group, OIOS supported the development of a handbook entitled "Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation: towards UNEG guidance". The Office piloted the handbook in its programme evaluations of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (see A/65/752) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (see E/AC.51/2011/2).

14. At the national level, United Nations entities continued to the use United Nations country team performance indicators and reported positive experiences with respect to gender assessments. Nevertheless, they differed in terms of the quality, scope, understanding and use of these assessments across countries and regions and their effectiveness in informing gender-related programming. For example, while UNAIDS reported increased use of gender assessments at the national and regional levels, only a few of the assessments included a review of institutional capacity to address gender and HIV.

C. Human and financial resources

Human resources and institutional arrangements

15. Entities are increasingly incorporating gender equality into their organizational strategic frameworks, programmes of work and budgets as a cross-cutting objective or goal. To this end, senior management leadership has been crucial. For example, in 2011 the Department of Political Affairs held two special management meetings that were focused on gender-related commitments; a director was tasked with gender

policy development and monitoring oversight. ILO developed a module on "Managing for gender equality" to help managers acquire the leadership and personal effectiveness skills necessary to ensure a gender-friendly work environment. Examples of existing arrangements include the stand-alone report on the organization's actions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment that the Director-General of UNESCO presents to each session of the organization's General Conference. In UNIDO, a gender adviser takes part in the appraisal group and advises managers on mainstreaming gender into all programmes or projects at the design and planning stages. Since 2011 in OHCHR, senior managers have been assisted by gender facilitators in addressing coordination and management issues. In ECLAC, the Division for Gender Affairs provided substantive support aimed at the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the strategic planning exercise for the 2014-2015 biennium, carried out in 2011. As result, the gender dimension was integrated into the logical frameworks of all 13 subprogrammes.

16. Assessment of the capacity of United Nations staff in terms of efforts to achieve gender equality continues to be reported by various United Nations entities. For example, the UNHCR age, gender and diversity policy (2011) stipulates that all operations are obliged to incorporate an age, gender and diversity perspective into the design, implementation and assessment of all UNHCR activities. In addition, FAO has created an accountability mechanism on gender mainstreaming for senior review and gender focal points by including gender in their performance reviews.

17. Gender specialists, focal points and focal point networks play a key role in promoting gender mainstreaming. Many entities have established gender specialist teams, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, FAO, ILO, including its International Training Centre, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO. The gender advisory teams in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support support the mainstreaming of gender into the work of missions and Headquarters. In the Department of Political Affairs, a gender focal point network regularly monitors and reports on issues relating to women and peace and security. WHO has reported the placement of gender focal points in specific departments and all WHO regions and capacity-building training as means to promote gender mainstreaming in the organization.

18. United Nations entities reported efforts to upgrade their gender focal points and to establish cross-cutting teams to promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into their work and to assist the development of gender-related policies and strategies. For example, FAO revised its gender focal point structure by appointing gender focal points at a more senior level, developing new terms of reference and allocating at least 20 per cent of their time to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

19. Gender theme groups play a critical role as convenors of women's groups and as gender equality advocates to influence the development agenda in the context of joint programming. In Fiji and Samoa, for example, gender theme groups have supported gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process and have developed proposals aimed at improving gender equality performance in key areas.

20. Operational guidance and relevant manuals, reference materials and checklists are reported as means to enhance the awareness of United Nations staff, including

senior management, with respect to what they are expected to deliver in terms of gender mainstreaming. For example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's *2012 Gender Marker Report: Analysis of Results and Lessons Learned* demonstrates the added value of joint programmes carried out by humanitarian organizations.

21. Ensuring gender balance in staffing across the United Nations system continues to be a challenge. In 2010, the representation of women in the system was 40 per cent, ranging from 57.3 per cent at the P-2 level to 38.4 per cent at the P-4 level and 25.7 per cent at the D-2 level. Between December 2008 and December 2010, the highest rate of growth was 6.5 per cent (from 24.4 to 30.9 per cent), at the Assistant Secretary-General level and above, which clearly showed the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to achieve gender parity in hiring. Through Policy Committee decision 2011/19, the Secretary-General called upon all heads of departments, offices and missions to accelerate progress towards gender parity, with particular attention accorded to improving gender balance at the P-4 to D-2 levels; to include at least one female candidate in all candidate lists; and to maintain accurate statistics on the representation of women at all levels, including an appropriate baseline for five-year projections, against which progress is measured.

Financial resources

22. The importance of regular and predictable funding for gender equality was emphasized by United Nations entities. Some entities have budgets that visibly allocate financial and human resources to gender mainstreaming in order to achieve gender equality goals. Examples in 2011 included UNICFF, where 58 per cent of programme budget expenditures went towards results that contributed principally or significantly to the promotion of gender equality. An analysis of the UNDP gender marker shows that 32 per cent of its total expenditure in 2011, either made a significant contribution to gender equality or had gender equality as its principal objective. In UNESCO, 17.5 per cent of the total budget of the programme sectors for the biennium 2010-2011 was allocated to gender equality issues. IFAD invested 13 per cent of its total programme management development budget related to staff time in the promotion of gender equality, with 14 per cent of the budget dedicated to gender-related activities. Using the Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender marker, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs identified a decrease in the number of gender-blind projects from 45 per cent in 2010 to 10 per cent in 2012. In 2011, the Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues funded 16 projects that were gender-responsive, 4 of which were aimed at the empowerment of women and the elimination of violence against indigenous women.

23. United Nations entities reported the ongoing development of gender markers, which are tools for tracking financing and results towards gender-responsive development outcomes. The trend is towards the systematic tracking of targeted interventions to achieve women's empowerment, and the further definition of criteria to enhance the accuracy of reporting on financial commitments to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the programmes of United Nations entities. Developments in 2011 include the following:

(a) The system-wide action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women includes a performance indicator to assess whether an entity has a gender marker in place and whether the marker is linked to resource allocations to efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(b) In response to the Secretary-General's seven-point action plan on women's participation in peacebuilding, a gender marker is used to determine whether at least 15 per cent of United Nations-managed funds in support of peacebuilding are dedicated to gender equality (see A/65/354-S/2010/466);

(c) WFP has adopted the Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender marker as part of its gender mainstreaming accountability framework;

(d) Following UNDP and UNICEF, UNFPA and ITC have adopted a marker system to monitor the allocation and expenditure of resources for gender mainstreaming and to improve planning and programming in the area of gender equality. In UNFPA, the gender marker has been piloted in Azerbaijan, Burundi, Indonesia and Turkey; its implementation will be mandatory throughout the organization in 2013.

24. ESCWA, FAO and UNAIDS use different financial tracking mechanisms that permit the tracking of the organizations' gender-related results in terms of specific outcomes, outputs and activities.

25. Applying gender markers to institutional programming and financing instruments is a good practice adopted by the United Nations system. The markers have proved to be effective in mobilizing and coordinating financing towards the realization of women's rights. They also help to improve the effectiveness of development assistance and, more broadly, to improve the design and implementation of programmes. Nevertheless, the ability of the United Nations system to systematically assess gender-related resource allocation and expenditure continues to be limited by the existing financial mechanisms. Inadequate coding, lack of systematic reporting and incomplete data continue to challenge the implementation of gender markers and the development of a system-wide tracking mechanism that allows for aggregation and comparability. Owing to the nature of the interventions carried out, gender equality components are often integrated into projects, making it difficult to separate gender equality expenditure from "other" expenditure.

26. Overall, significant progress has been made within the United Nations system since 2008 in the development of means to track investments in gender equality, as well as the development of gender markers in a number of United Nations agencies. However, more can be done to improve their effective use. The review panel of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which was focused on financing for gender equality, recommended that data be published publicly and on a regular basis; that the tracking systems be complemented with institutional measures for quality assurance, evaluation and capacity development; and that efforts be accelerated towards a United Nations system-wide gender marker that generates comparable data at the country and sectoral levels and utilizes comparable standards and parameters. In addition, the dissemination of best practices was suggested as a means to encourage the broader use of gender markers among United Nations entities.

27. United Nations entities will work to adopt gender markers that produce high-quality data that are comparable across the system. To that end, the subgroup on accounting for resources for gender equality (co-chaired by UNDP and UNICEF) of the United Nations Development Group task team on gender equality (chaired by UN-Women) has been preparing a paper setting out principles and standards for

gender markers to be adopted by United Nations entities. The paper is to be finalized and presented for consideration by relevant decision-making mechanisms within the United Nations system in the first half of 2012.

D. Capacity development

28. Entities reported efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming through staff development and training programmes aimed at sharpening United Nations staff skills in addressing gender-related issues. Initiatives undertaken in 2011 included a one-day ITC training programme that provides for a common understanding of gender across the organization, and a UNESCO capacity development and training course on gender mainstreaming provided to staff in its Brazil, Nepal, New Delhi and Iraq field offices. The gender equality and non-discrimination programme of the International Training Centre of ILO provides courses on the "gender campus" concerning basic concepts, gender in global development, gender budgeting and gender for statisticians.

29. Entities also reported the use of learning tools developed by or in cooperation with other entities. For example, in UNHCR, 251 staff registered for the e-learning course "Different needs, equal opportunities", developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and the e-learning course "Creating safe learning environments", which draws attention to gender issues while addressing the safety of educational environments.

30. United Nations entities also reported the use of available United Nations Development Group resources as well as entity-specific guidelines to assist United Nations staff in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework formulation process. For example, FAO has a dedicated intranet site on FAO and United Nations reform, from which guidelines on the country programming framework and guidelines for the organization's participation in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process are available. ESCAP programme monitoring and evaluation guidelines contain recommendations to encourage the incorporation of gender dimensions into the development of indicators and related monitoring and evaluation procedures.

31. Despite the progress made in the development of capacity development programmes within United Nations entities, there remains room for improvement. Responses from United Nations entities, including Resident Coordinators, pointed out that focusing on theoretical material can be useful if the material is provided for reference, but tends to overload training sessions and to undermine the sharing of experiences and transfer of knowledge on the practical application of gender mainstreaming approaches. Training events and workshops that lack follow-up have limited effectiveness. Most learning programmes are available in only English and French, and the cost of the development and translation of e-learning products is high. Issues related to the compatibility of learning platforms and software solutions delay the development of certain learning products. Furthermore, in moving from a learning environment to an applied operational environment, staff often find it difficult to integrate gender mainstreaming information into their day-to-day work.

32. Identified strategies for overcoming these gaps and challenges include: contextualizing training in the context of national and regional experiences; providing options for training such as self-learning, workshops, peer interaction,

coaching and mentoring; and linking capacity development concepts to practical applications and to development mechanisms such as United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and the poverty reduction strategy papers. Furthermore, guidance tools work best when they are introduced either through web-based seminars or on a face-to-face basis, and when they are informed by a well-formulated needs assessment, developed together with the participants and placed in the context of a longer-term strategy, including follow-up activities in the form of coaching and mentoring. Internal information-sharing through web-based information and knowledge exchange platforms and theme-specific seminars are other good practices in this area.

Data collection and analysis

33. Sex-disaggregated information and gender-responsive indicators have assumed increased importance in the work of the United Nations, in particular in the development frameworks, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the Millennium Development Goals reports and the poverty reduction strategy papers, as well as in the context of the enhanced focus on accountability and results-based management within the United Nations system.

34. United Nations entities continue to support countries in the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data to identify and address gender disparities and inequality. For example, technical cooperation activities carried out by ECLAC resulted in the integration by 12 countries in the region of gender-related indicators into their databases or official documents. The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality initiative, launched in 2011 by, inter alia, UN-Women and the Statistics Division in collaboration with Member States, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), focuses on helping countries to build national capacity and strengthen national systems on data collection in critical areas. In 2011, ESCWA produced a guide on gender mainstreaming in the policies, programmes and activities of ministries of labour and social affairs in ESCWA member countries. The Statistical Division of ECE carried out capacity-building activities on the production and use of gender statistics for policy planning, implementation and monitoring in Europe. Women represented more than 70 per cent of participants in the workshops.

E. Coherence, coordination, and knowledge and information management

Coherence, coordination and joint action

35. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality continues to be a key forum for achieving more effective coordination and coherence with respect to the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system. In 2011, the Network provided a joint statement on empowering rural women to the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and produced a fact sheet on rural women and the Millennium Development Goals, working through the Inter-Agency Task Force on Rural Women.

36. In 2012, in promoting partnership and collaboration outside the United Nations system, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the Network on Gender Equality of the OECD Development Assistance Committee held their biennial joint workshop, on "Food security and land rights: empowering rural

women". Discussions were focused on how to enhance coordination and complementarity among donors and multilateral partners, in order to accelerate rural women's economic empowerment while improving aid effectiveness. Key messages on the issue were agreed upon to contribute to the intergovernmental agenda for 2012, including in terms of the Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, as well as the international dialogue on the post-2015 development framework. The Inter-Agency Network also continues to play a critical role in advancing the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women", including in the definition of its 2012-2013 action plan and in supporting efforts at the regional and local levels.

37. In accordance with the mandate set out in its founding resolution, UN-Women is driving more effective and efficient coordination throughout the United Nations system and building strategic partnerships to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. During 2011, the Entity leveraged and engaged with a range of inter-agency forums to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The development of the system-wide action plan is one of the outcomes of the work of such inter-agency forums. In addition, UN-Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP joined forces to develop an initiative to support the economic empowerment of rural women and girls. Overall, 30 new memorandums of understanding were signed between UN-Women and other United Nations agencies.

38. At the national level, the leadership of the Resident Coordinator in promoting a coherent and system-wide approach to gender mainstreaming remains critical. Gender theme groups continue to play a supportive role in these efforts, while UN-Women increasingly coordinates the work of the United Nations country teams on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

39. Currently, there are 106 joint programmes focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women, a slight increase from the 104 in place in 2010. United Nations entities recognize that joint programmes have fostered a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to gender equality, exploring avenues and synergies for the promotion of sustainable change and providing a vehicle for the capacity development of local partners and stakeholders, leading to the longer-term sustainability of efforts.

40. In Latin America and the Caribbean, FAO, ECLAC and UN-Women have worked together to develop evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at empowering women in rural areas. In Asia, Partners for Prevention is a joint regional programme implemented by UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women and the United Nations Volunteers Programme in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. UNFPA and UNICEF jointly implement the world's largest programme to accelerate the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting. The programme utilizes a human-rights-based approach in supporting the development and implementation of laws, policies and programmes.

41. The gender equality component of the UNAIDS strategy is being operationalized through the UNAIDS Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV. The Agenda, which is being implemented in approximately 95 countries in partnership with civil society, has served as a catalyst for programmatic action and for raising awareness about the importance of ensuring equal access for women and girls to HIV-related services.

42. United Nations entities and Resident Coordinators report that joint programmes often lead to innovative arrangements for ensuring that gender mainstreaming delivers results. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, such programmes have allowed for the strengthening of national and local capacities to provide quality health services, with a focus on human rights, gender equality and community participation. Tajikistan has been able to set a strong gender equality agenda in the context of the poverty reduction strategy paper and the Millennium Development Goals report. In Afghanistan, the United Nations is working closely with national partners to improve the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data. Burundi has used the UNDP gender equality performance indicators to promote national efforts to advance the empowerment of women. The United Nations country team in Togo is supporting the Ministry of Planning in the formulation of its poverty reduction strategy paper, through an integrated approach in which gender equality is a cross-cutting objective. In Chile, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process is aimed at the reduction of inequalities and poverty, setting specific gender equality outcomes and outputs. The United Nations country team in Bosnia and Herzegovina has advanced a joint programme on armed violence prevention, combining elements of the agendas on human security and gender-based violence. In Paraguay, the strengthening of national capacity for the production of sex-disaggregated data is one of the outcomes of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

Knowledge management and information-sharing

43. United Nations entities continue to use varied approaches, including electronic media, to disseminate research, guidelines and good practices on effective gender mainstreaming. For example, UNRISD uses gender as a cross-cutting tool for analysis. Its publications on the social dimensions of the green economy, the impacts of crisis on social protection and emerging research on a post-2015 agenda have a strong gender dimension. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute has undertaken the first European survey on violence against women, which includes the collection of data in 2012 in 27 countries and the conduct of a survey to identify gender-specific needs in the area of addiction. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs created the category "Promoting gender-responsive delivery of public services" for the 2012 United Nations Public Service Awards, as well as a new toolkit on gender equality and e-government in Asia-Pacific countries. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa has supported Member States in the areas of gender advocacy, the formulation of gender policies and national action plans on Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), on women and peace and security.

44. New developments with respect to the inter-agency website WomenWatch include a feature on rural women and a prototype for an online data collection application for the system-wide action plan. Furthermore, in 2011 the website disseminated more than 1,200 United Nations news items on gender equality and women's empowerment.

F. Accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment: system-wide action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women

45. In 2006, the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) endorsed a United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women and strategy on gender mainstreaming (see CEB/2006/2 and Corr.1, annex). With a view to the implementation of the policy, it requested the development of a system-wide action plan to accelerate gender mainstreaming within the policies and programmes of the United Nations system in accordance with the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2. The action plan was to reflect a system-wide understanding of concepts, norms, standards and indicators, to be built on the lessons learned and achievements of each entity and to specify the actions required for the implementation of its six elements — accountability, results-based management, human and financial resources, capacity development, oversight, and knowledge management — setting out time frames and indicators, responsibilities, accountability mechanisms and resources. Its implementation would strengthen the work of the United Nations system to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women both system-wide and within individual entities. The establishment of UN-Women revived the drive to institute a system-wide accountability framework for the system's work on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women led the development of the system-wide action plan in line with its founding resolution (resolution 64/289).

46. The system-wide action plan is one of three interconnecting mechanisms that will establish a comprehensive and coherent United Nations accountability framework for gender equality and women's empowerment. While the action plan focuses on performance, including corporate processes and institutional arrangements at the level of the individual entity, another mechanism, the United Nations country team performance indicators for gender equality and the empowerment of women, introduced in 2008, is focused on United Nations system action at the country level. The third mechanism will be focused on accountability for the contributions of the United Nations system to gender equality development results at the country and normative levels. Plans for this third phase are included in the plan.

Description of the system-wide action plan

47. The system-wide action plan is a unified accountability framework designed to simultaneously promote common understanding, enhanced coherence, systematic self-assessment and a steady targeted and progressive approach to which United Nations system entities are to adhere in their work on gender equality and the empowerment of women at the corporate level. It follows a scorecard approach and establishes requirements, based on intergovernmental mandates for gender mainstreaming, that United Nations entities are expected to meet.

48. The system-wide action plan draws on the findings and applies the recommendations of a number of recent evaluations, which found that senior managers need clear guidelines as to what they are accountable for, indicators towards which to strive, and adequate resources and capacity on the part of their entities, in order to be successful leaders on gender equality and women's empowerment. The plan's accountability framework supports this by providing for a

common understanding of, and setting out minimum requirements and guidance for, the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. This in turn will facilitate an analysis of strengths and weaknesses across the United Nations system in the six elements noted above, and identify the resources and capacity needed to build on strengths and fill gaps. Reporting by United Nations entities under the action plan will simultaneously provide both an overview of the state of the work on gender carried out in the entity and a guide indicating the directions in which entities might progress. It will facilitate accountability, as the United Nations system will, for the first time, gain a comprehensive overview using common measures of performance to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including through gender mainstreaming.

49. The action plan includes a set of 15 system-wide performance indicators, embedded within a reporting framework that includes timelines, measures of accountability and budgets. The entities of the United Nations system will be assessed through performance indicators that employ a five-point rating system showing whether the entity is exceeding, meeting or falling short of requirements to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, including through gender mainstreaming.

50. In accordance with the 2006 CEB policy, the performance indicators of the system-wide action plan include both substantive and human resources components. Substantive elements include strategic planning; programme review; evaluation; monitoring and reporting; and knowledge generation and management. The human resources components comprise internal functions such as staff performance appraisal, compacts and any other accountability mechanisms for senior managers, staff capacity development and the equal representation of women.

51. The performance indicators are supported by a set of technical notes setting out, inter alia, the intergovernmental mandate for each performance indicator, how the performance indicator should be used, and current examples of use and good practice across the United Nations system. The technical notes will serve as a "living document" that will be periodically updated, in particular with regard to good practice.

Development process

52. The process of development of the system-wide action plan was organized around two phases during which consultations, facilitated by UN-Women, engaged 51 entities, United Nations secretariat departments and offices, and inter-agency coordination bodies, often involving multiple consultations with each entity. In the first phase, in-person consultations were held in New York in July 2011, in Geneva in September 2011, and with the regional commissions and entities outside North America and Europe on a virtual basis in October and November. Consultations were tailored to specific entities, including: individual departments and offices throughout the Secretariat; specialized agencies and inter-agency bodies; the United Nations Evaluation Group; the representatives of internal audit services of the United Nations organizations; and the Joint Inspection Unit.

53. The first phase of the system-wide action plan yielded a draft framework ready for testing by pilot entities. The second phase, implemented between November 2011 and February 2012, comprised the testing of the plan for feasibility and viability by seven pilot entities constituting a representative sample of the United

Nations system (the International Atomic Energy Agency, OHCHR, ESCWA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNAIDS) and by the International Organization for Migration. The pilot exercise, consisting of consultations within and across the entities, produced an outcome that validated the action plan as a sound and viable instrument that was also broad and basic enough to encompass all entities despite the diversity of their mandates. It also emerged as a coherent and manageable tool for accountability and reporting, with refined indicators that increased its applicability.

54. The consistency and depth of the consultative process has led to the approval of an action plan that United Nations entities feel assured will meaningfully contribute to the revitalization of the work of the United Nations system on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Roll-out

55. A structured roll-out of the action plan through December 2012 will precede reporting in 2013. The roll-out is critical to the plan's sustainability and success, and it will require the continued engagement of all entities, including adequately resourced technical support from UN-Women.

56. During the roll-out, UN-Women will provide technical support, tailored to the needs of the different entities, and in support of the establishment of communities of practice and repositories of knowledge in different performance areas. Other United Nations entities will also provide support in their respective areas of strength and expertise.

57. In addition, outreach will be provided to the specialized agencies, including those with a predominantly technical focus, which may face greater challenges in applying the action plan than other entities of the United Nations system. To plan for this eventuality, particular efforts have been made to engage with the specialized entities during the consultations on the plan. This dialogue will continue during the roll-out. Tailored support will be developed for the specialized entities.

58. UN-Women will also promote synergies for the advancement of the action plan and will coordinate the activities of the common system in meeting the performance indicators. Networks will be set up to cover the different geographic regions.

59. A peer review mechanism will be established under which entities with similar mandates will exchange visits to ensure accurate reporting on the action plan and to share experience on good practices and challenges.

60. In the United Nations Secretariat the implementation of the action plan will be linked to work on accountability, results-based management and change management.

III. The role of UN-Women in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system

61. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2011/6, called upon UN-Women, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/289, to fully assume its role of leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the

United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

62. In carrying out its mandate, the strategic approaches adopted by UN-Women include: promotion of joint action and inter-agency collaboration; strengthening the leadership and advancing the work of United Nations country teams and gender theme groups; supporting gender mainstreaming through technical cooperation with United Nations agencies; provision of knowledge products and capacity development; advocating and monitoring progress towards gender balance and the status of women in the United Nations system; and facilitating the establishment and use of accountability frameworks.

63. During 2011, UN-Women focused on the advancement of more effective and efficient coordination and the building of strategic partnerships within the United Nations system in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The system-wide and inter-agency role of UN-Women is grounded in the intergovernmental decision to accord it a leadership position with respect to the work of the United Nations system on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women also engaged with a range of inter-agency forums to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, contributing to the development of strong positions on gender equality for the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, and the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, Turkey.

64. At country level, where UN-Women has a strong presence, it has taken on a leadership role in coordinating the chairing or co-chairing of gender theme groups in 45 countries, and it has contributed to the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks of 20 States. The Entity has worked closely with and has enjoyed strong and valued support from the country teams and resident coordinators, and it participates in joint programmes with partner agencies.

65. UN-Women has promoted coherence in the system-wide response to national priorities on gender equality and stronger accountability of United Nations country teams through its presence in all eight "Delivering as one" pilots, and, increasingly, in "self-starter" countries. Initial experience shows a marked improvement in the focus on gender equality in the pilots, including the greater involvement of United Nations agencies and United Nations country teams.

66. In supporting inter-agency coordination in gender mainstreaming, the Entity has launched a community of practice aimed at knowledge-sharing and capacity-building on gender issues. In collaboration with the Task Team on Gender Equality of the United Nations Development Group, UN-Women also started working on a roster of gender experts for the use of the United Nations country teams and other entities.

67. In order to provide an overview of the efforts of the entities of the United Nations system to institutionalize gender into their respective areas of work, UN-Women has created two system-wide repositories containing the specific policies, strategies and action plans of the individual entities and their online gender mainstreaming capacity-development tools and resources. The repositories, which include a large compilation of resources developed since 2000, are designed as evolving, open-content management systems, providing access to new United Nations gender mainstreaming policy documents online.

IV. Existing gaps and challenges

68. Despite a number of advances in the elaboration of institutional gender equality policies and strategies, implementation remains uneven, and evaluation of their impact in terms of gender equality results and outcomes continues to present a challenge. United Nations entities continue to lack mechanisms that produce comparable data in tracking the allocation and expenditure of resources for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Accurate reporting at the system-wide level continues to be challenged by the variety of tools and the different financial systems in place.

69. United Nations entities have noted remaining gaps and challenges in incorporating gender into results-based management, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process. The lack of concrete tools for gender mainstreaming and of a common vision on how to mainstream a gender perspective into the whole range of activities of the United Nations system continue to hinder further progress. In addition, entities reported that they were using the United Nations country team performance indicators for gender equality although there is still a lack of follow-up on assessment, results and recommendations.

70. A number of gaps continue to challenge United Nations entities in relation to their internal oversight functions with regard to gender equality work. The lack of clear terms of reference, including agreement on sample sizes and sources of supportive data and alignment with Organization-wide evaluation policies, deter effective evaluation. A lesson learned is that monitoring results and evaluation findings must be discussed and interpreted with staff, management and the governing bodies in order to develop appropriate responses.

71. Entities stressed the need for a standard gender assessment tool to guide a robust assessment of the planning and budgeting of national programming, which, while capturing lessons learned, would also support countries in leveraging and mobilizing resources for gender equality.

72. While considerable efforts have been made with respect to the collection, analysis and use of sex and age-disaggregated data and information, the lack of such data, or its unreliability, continue to pose challenges. After data analysis has been conducted, it is not always utilized or translated into policy and/or programmatic actions or evidence-based policy formulation. United Nations entities reported on a lack of systematic sex-disaggregated data in technical areas such as trade, economic development and infrastructure. In addition, in some sensitive gender-related areas (gender-based violence, sexual violence and related harmful practices), the collection and use of data has been constrained by cultural norms and values.

73. There are promising developments in the area of capacity development, in particular in cases where programmes have been informed by a well-formulated needs assessment, developed with participants and put in the context of a longer-term strategy. Nevertheless, entities also reported the lack of follow-up activities in the form of "learning-by-doing" coaching in collaboration with United Nations entities, in order to ensure the effective long-term implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy. In addition, entities lack a concrete framework, including: quality standards, methodologies and accountability mechanisms to measure staff performance; incentives for organizational learning for gender equality; and an adequate budget.

74. The underresourcing of gender equality programmes remains a challenge, in particular with regard to implementation at the country level. Although the creation of UN-Women was intended to address the underresourcing gap, financial contributions to the Entity, while growing, remain far below target. Unless sufficient resources are both allocated and earmarked within the budgets of United Nations entities for the financing of gender expertise and gender-sensitive approaches, the achievement of meaningful results will remain a challenge.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

75. The present report indicates that most United Nations entities have advanced and contributed to the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2011/6. Several entities have reported progress, including the incorporation of criteria related to gender equality and women's empowerment into their overall accountability frameworks, monitoring, evaluations, oversight and reporting mechanisms, including performance indicators and benchmarks to measure progress. During the reporting period, and in line with the mandate of UN-Women to lead, coordinate and promote accountability in the work of the United Nations system on gender equality, the entities agreed on the system-wide action plan as a unified accountability framework that promotes common understanding, enhanced coherence and systematic self-assessment of their gender equality work. The challenge now is its implementation.

76. Other areas of progress include the promotion of coherent and harmonized policies and strategies, the provision of mainstreaming tools, enhanced capacity development and the creation of knowledge-management networks and databases. The entities have also advanced the development of unified methodologies for measuring progress and are increasingly seeking to form partnerships to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

77. The entities have worked collaboratively with UN-Women to bring gender equality issues into global and national dialogues. At the global level, and through their participation in the work of the United Nations country teams, they are active in strengthening the support of the United Nations system in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, enhancing its effectiveness and coherence.

78. Despite important progress, much more needs to be done. In order to guide the work of the United Nations system in addressing the gaps and challenges outlined above, the Economic and Social Council may wish to call upon the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, to:

(a) Continue to work to better align gender equality programming with national priorities, with the aim of mainstreaming a gender perspective into legislation, policies and programmes;

(b) Promote a facilitating and evolving environment for gender mainstreaming at the organizational level, and ensure that members of the resident coordinator system at the country level dedicate adequate financial and human resources to coordinated and joint programming on gender equality;

(c) Strengthen the coordination of gender-responsive operational activities at the country level, in the context of the resident coordinator system, in partnership with other entities and national partners;

(d) Promote accountability for gender equality results, including in evaluations conducted by the United Nations country teams, thus ensuring the application of the gender-related norms and standards of the United Nations evaluation group;

(e) Ensure the full and effective implementation of the system-wide action plan and the systematic use of monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including for United Nations country teams and in the evaluation of individual staff performance;

(f) Promote the use of gender markers that produce data comparable across the United Nations system and integrate them into the overall accountability frameworks of the entities of the common system in order to attain more coherent, representative and effective financial tracking and monitoring, including undertaking gender-responsive budget planning, fund allocation and revenue raising and reporting on gender equality results;

(g) Secure technical expertise for gender equality in programme planning and implementation;

(h) Encourage the United Nations country teams to use accountability mechanisms in their work at the country level, including through the use of their performance indicators, gender scorecards and gender audits;

(i) Provide ongoing capacity development on gender mainstreaming for resident coordinators, United Nations country teams, gender theme groups and other staff in order to ensure that they are better able to identify and seize strategic opportunities for enhanced coordination and alignment of programming with national priorities on gender equality and women's empowerment;

(j) Draw on the gender expertise available within the United Nations system, specifically at UN-Women, to assist in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process and other development programming frameworks in order to ensure that gender dimensions are systematically addressed;

(k) Call on the United Nations entities to regularly and systematically collect, use and disseminate data disaggregated by sex and age, support the preparation of corporate and country level documents, for example the strategic and programme frameworks, including corporate gender strategies and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks; such data could guide country programming investments and indicators to measure progress and impact, including more systematic attention to capacity development in gender statistics.

79. In order to better assess change and the impact of gender mainstreaming over time, the Economic and Social Council may wish to request the Secretary-General to submit future reports to it on a biennial basis, starting at the Council's substantive session in 2014.